

# **Frequently Asked Questions About the 1998 Adopted Budget**

## ***HOW MUCH IS THE 1998 KING COUNTY ADOPTED BUDGET?***

In 1998 the entire King County budget will total more than \$2.5 billion. Of this amount, \$397 million (\$401 million including CX Transfers to CIP) represents the Current Expense Fund (the County's General Fund). This fund pays for direct services such as jails, police, parks, human services, and administrative departments; almost \$1.2 billion are dedicated for departments like transit, wastewater treatment, health, roads and solid waste; and \$716 million are in capital improvements to roads, parks, and other major public facilities.

## ***IS THERE ANYTHING NEW IN THIS BUDGET?***

Yes. The 1998 Budget adopted four new major initiatives:

First, this budget will increase reactive patrol in unincorporated areas, and expand police contract services with suburban cities. In 1998 we will open two additional units at the new Regional Justice Center in Kent; open three new police storefronts creating a greater police presence in our unincorporated communities; establish a Family and Domestic Violence Intervention Unit in the Department of Public Safety, including the addition of two new domestic violence detectives, an additional sexual predator detective, and a sergeant to supervise the unit; add six new deputy prosecuting attorneys to handle the increasing number of domestic violence cases and youth offender cases; and initiate a new day detention program as an alternative to incarceration of juveniles that do not pose a threat to community safety.

Second, the budget addresses the growing need to improve our regional transportation system by significantly expanding transit services, including peak and off peak bus services in suburban King County, expanded vanpool and paratransit service, and a proposal to expand park and ride lot capacity in the future. In addition, the budget proposes a new flexible approach to budgeting road improvement projects aimed at accelerating improvements and construction of needed roadways in fast growing suburban areas.

Third, the budget expands on recent initiatives aimed at promoting economic development in the region and more specifically addressing the need of business for skilled and semi-skilled labor. This budget expands on the initiatives we began earlier this year to invest in the development of our work force, linking many of those served through our human services network with businesses that are looking for workers.

Finally, this budget meets the needs of a growing population by expanding athletic field capacity by over 100 fields by acquiring sites, constructing new facilities and improving existing fields over the next 6 years.

### ***ARE ANY TAX OR FEE INCREASES INCLUDED IN THIS BUDGET?***

This is the first Current Expense Fund budget proposed by a County Executive that has not provided for increasing property tax revenues by the full 106% authorized under RCW 84.55. This budget assumes an increase of property tax revenues in 1998 of 105.5%. This reduction in authorized revenues is accomplished without jeopardizing essential criminal justice system services, which represent about 63% of the CX Fund budget.

There are no general tax increases adopted for 1998. Modest fee increases for various environmental health fees, animal licenses and marriage licenses are proposed to offset increased costs due to inflation. The first bus fare increase since 1993 is proposed which will simply raise fares to the nearest quarter. This increase is less than the rate of inflation.

### ***HOW WAS THIS BUDGET BALANCED?***

This budget was balanced by a combination of factors, including reductions by almost every agency of county government; redirecting funds freed up from the refinancing of the Kingdome roof debt to criminal justice services and housing initiatives; the use of reserves set aside to help fund the operating cost of the new RJC; and the continuing efforts by departments to be more efficient.

### ***HOW MANY PEOPLE WORK FOR KING COUNTY?***

For 1998, King County government will employ 12,606 FTEs, an addition of 634 FTEs from 1997 levels. Most of these adds are associated with expansion of transit services; increased permitting activity in the Department of Development and Environmental Services; increases in criminal justice agencies like the Prosecuting Attorney and the Departments of Public Safety and Adult Detention; and, growth in Public Health associated with the receipt of new state and federal funds, and the conversion of part time to full time positions.

### ***HOW WILL A PERSON IN UNINCORPORATED KING COUNTY BE AFFECTED BY THIS BUDGET?***

This budget will improve police services in unincorporated King County in 1998 by funding additional police officers. The Department of Public Safety is increasing reactive patrol staff, establishing a Family and Domestic Violence Intervention Unit, and opening up three new police storefronts in Fall City, Cottage Lake and Briarwood.

This budget commits King County to the acquisition, construction or improvement of more than 100 ballfields during the next six years to meet a growing demand for recreational facilities for children and adults throughout the County. 23 new ballfields are proposed for two new unincorporated area parks - Section 36 on the Sammamish Plateau and a new regional park at Lake Sawyer in south King County. Many existing fields elsewhere in unincorporated areas have been identified for improvements in order to meet the growing demand for fields.

### ***WHAT IMPACT WILL THE BUDGET HAVE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES?***

In 1998, we will maintain current levels of human services and increase public health services. Funds used to contract with community service providers for such services as subsidized day care, child abuse prevention and help for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault are maintained. New state and federal money will be used to increase public health funding for a variety of services such as primary care for uninsured women and children, and expanded health services to teenagers.

This budget provides significant new funding to address the housing needs of low income citizens. \$1 million of new funding is committed to the Housing Opportunity Fund (HOF) to support development of housing for low income, homeless and special needs populations. This is in addition to the \$1.3 million that was previously committed to HOF in 1998. These funds leverage \$5 in federal funds for every dollar of County funds. In 1998, we will also commit \$500,000 to efforts to create more affordable housing opportunities for working families.

This budget expands on the initiatives we began earlier this year to invest in the development of our work force, linking many of those served through our human services network with businesses that are looking for workers. For these efforts to be successful, we must also invest in those support services that make work successful - education and skills training, affordable day care services for children, and access to reliable transportation. This budget supports each of these critical components of a successful transition to economic independence.

### ***HOW WILL EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES BE SUPPORTED BETWEEN VOTER APPROVED LEVIES?***

The failure of the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Levy in November created financial challenges to the regional Medic One/EMS system. Although a three year EMS Levy was subsequently approved by voters in February 1998, the property tax revenues from the levy may not be collected until 1999. King County, Seattle, suburban cities, and fire districts all stepped forward to maintain services and insure that Medic One services would continue to be there when needed.

Because levy revenues will not be collected until 1999 (causing a shortfall for 1998), the King County Executive, in response to a Council proviso, has submitted an ordinance revising the 1998 Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Division budget, including a revised Emergency Medical Services Fund Financial Plan for 1998-2001.

The ordinance and revised financial plan include a three and a half year funding and operational proposal for the three program areas supported by the Medic One/EMS Levy. These program areas include Advanced Life Support (paramedic) Programs, Basic Life Support Services (provided by fire departments), and Regional Support Programs and Services. For the period 1999-2001, it is anticipated that Advanced Life Support Programs and Regional Support Programs and Services will increase at the rate of inflation. Basic Life Support Services will be maintained at 1997 levels throughout the three-year period. It is anticipated that King County's Current Expense contribution of \$375,000 will continue through 1999-2001.

The revised 1998 EMS Division budget of \$20,268,533 reflects changes in three major program areas supported by the EMS Levy. First, Basic Life Support funding is reduced by \$4,231,221, representing funds unavailable to fire departments for the first six months of 1998, following the failure of the November 1997 levy. Second, paramedic providers were slated for an increase of approximately \$620,000 from 1998 funding levels, but will instead be maintained at 1997 levels.

Third, the Regional Support Services and Programs has been reduced by \$110,935, reflecting efficiencies identified by EMS staff after reviewing the major strategic initiatives identified for 1998. Funding for 1998 includes a one time contribution of \$8 million from the County Current Expense Fund. This support was in part the result of various County departments making cuts in their operating budgets or delaying the start of new programs to support EMS services.